



Hector De La Torre

News Release

Assembly Member 50th District

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Legislation to Fund Doctors in Low-Income Communities Passes Key Committee

Sacramento, Calif. – The Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee, by a vote of 6-3, approved Assembly Bill 2439 authored by Assemblymember Hector De La Torre (D- South Gate). The bill will convert the current \$50 voluntary donation for the Steven M. Thompson Physician Corps Loan Repayment Program to a mandatory \$25 fee for all doctors.

Specifically, Assembly Bill 2439 will require the Medical Board of California to assess a \$25 fee to fund the Steven M. Thompson Program. This fee is in addition to the initial \$805 license and renewal fees paid by physicians and surgeons.

The Thompson program provides up to \$105,000 in loan reimbursements for physicians who practice medicine in an underserved community for a minimum of three years. Although the program has been successful, funding from the \$50 voluntary contribution has been minimal and unstable.

"If the bill is approved, it would generate approximately \$1.5 million annually to fund the Thompson Program. The state will directly benefit from doctors who commit to provide services in underserved communities," stated De La Torre. "It's no secret that our state is facing a physician shortage in the communities which need it most, particularly low-income urban and rural areas."

AB 2439 moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee for its fiscal hearing.

Background:

The Thompson Physician Corps Loan Repayment Program was created to provide student loan assistance to physicians and surgeons who agree to work in underserved areas, including rural and inner-city communities. Since its inception in 2003, participating physicians have served in communities including: Los Angeles, Oakland, San Bernardino, Sonoma, Woodland, San Diego, San Francisco and Bell Gardens.

Last year, the Medical Board of California reported that the Thompson Program collected \$55,000. Only 1,100 physicians and surgeons contributed to the program designed to encourage physicians to work in underserved areas. These figures are compared to over 63,000 physicians who renewed or received a new license to practice medicine in California in 2006-07.

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